

Mrs. Helen Ruffin, a dynamic and innovative Library Media Specialist at Sky Haven Elementary School in DeKalb County, created a unique reading competition in 1986. It was called The Reading Bowl and, in a competitive game format, questioned students about the content of the 20 Georgia Book Award Nominees each year. Her vision was to have teams, comprised of students from different schools, compete to test their knowledge of the selected books.

This idea came to her after serving on the Georgia Book Award Nomination Committee at the University of Georgia, in 1985. This book award began in the Department of Language Education at the University of Georgia's College of Education and its purpose, according to their website is, "to foster a love of reading in the children of Georgia, and to introduce them to books of literary excellence". From this experience, Mrs. Ruffin shared her vision with her colleagues who embraced the idea and helped her press forward.

In 2000, after Mrs. Ruffin's retirement, several Library Media Specialists formed the DeKalb County Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl (HRRB). Other school districts in Georgia heard about this unique reading initiative and soon wanted to join in the competition.

Creating a statewide reading initiative: In 2003-2004 the Georgia Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl (HRRB) Steering Committee was created comprised of members from The Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) and the Georgia Library Media Association (GLMA).

With the help of this Steering Committee, the Georgia Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl (HRRB) is now open to students in grades 4-12 across the state. Elementary and middle school students read and are quizzed on the 10 Georgia Book Award Nominees, while high school students read and are quizzed on the 20 Georgia Peach Teen Book Award Nominees. The books change yearly.

Forming Georgia Districts and Regions: Today, the Georgia HRRB includes six geographic competition regions; North, East, West, Metro, Middle, and South. All school districts in Georgia are divided into one of these regions.

From these six regions, two competition divisions have been formed: Division 1, which consists of the North, West, and Metro HRRB Regions, and Division 2, which consists of the East, Middle, and South HRRB Regions.

During the last few years, over 600 schools throughout Georgia have held competitions at the local school district level and have registered online for regional competitions.

We Salute Mrs. Helen Ruffin, Founder of the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl, and the HRRB Steering Committee members for their contributions to the literary development of Georgia students!